

Summary of Key Questions from the 2013 Conservation Opinion Survey



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“Your Ideas Count” 2013 Conservation Opinion Survey

The Conservation Opinion Survey is a decennial survey and was recently conducted in 2013 by the University of Missouri for the Department of Conservation. The survey is statistically designed to represent the adult population of Missouri. Information collected includes Missourian’s awareness and opinions about conservation issues and the participation of Missourians in outdoor activities. Previous Conservation Opinion Surveys were also conducted statewide in 1990 and 2003. Survey recipients had the choice of filling out a printed version of the survey or a web-based form. The printed mail survey was chosen by 83 percent and only 17 percent chose the web-based form. The survey was also emailed to full-time Department staff who could respond by a web-based form.

Key Findings

- **Most Missourians report they are interested in Missouri’s forests, fish, and wildlife (95 percent).** Only five percent of Missourians indicated they are “Not at all” interested.
- **Over three-quarters of Missourians agree that “The Missouri Department of Conservation is a name I can trust” (76 percent).**
- **About two-thirds of Missourians rate the job the Department of Conservation is doing as “Excellent” or “Good.”** When asked to rate the job the Department is doing in providing services for the State of Missouri, themselves, or their family: **68 percent reported “Excellent” or “Good” for the state; 67 percent for themselves; and 65 percent for their family.**
- **About two-thirds of Missourians report that the Department of Conservation is doing a good job of enforcing fish and wildlife laws (65 percent).**
- **Most Missourians reported being somewhat or very familiar with the Department of Conservation (86 percent).** Only two percent indicated “Don’t Know” and only a few were “Not at all” familiar with the Department (12 percent).
- **The major obstacle keeping Missourians from participating in outdoor activities is “Not enough time.”** The second most frequently reported major obstacle in the survey was “Friends/family don’t have time.” Less than 10 percent listed “Poorly maintained areas,” “Crowded activity areas” or “Inadequate facilities” as a major obstacle.
- **When asked how important having the following activities within 20 minutes of their home** (The following answered that the activity is of great or some importance): 86 percent felt “Hiking and walking trails” and also “Picnicking” was of great or some importance; 84 percent “Nature Viewing;” 80 percent “Nature Center” and “Green space;” 76 percent “Fishing” and “Boating and canoeing;” 72 percent “Camping” and “Bicycling;” 59 percent “Birding;” 55 percent “Hunting” and 45 percent “Horseback riding trails.”
- **Missourians are active in a wide variety of outdoor recreation pursuits.** In the last 12 months, 83 percent indicated they participated in “Walking in your neighborhood;” 80 percent “Watching programs on TV about the outdoors;” 78 percent “Pleasure driving to

enjoy the scenery;" 76 percent "Reading about nature and wildlife in magazines, books, or newspapers;" 74 percent "Watching birds or wildlife" and "Recycling at home;" 61 percent "Observing wildflowers;" 60 percent "Hiking in the outdoors;" 56 percent "Feeding birds or other wildlife near your home;" 52 percent "Photographing wildlife, wildflowers, or other natural things;" 45 percent "Fishing;" 42 percent "Visiting a nature center;" 27 percent "Using a public boat launch or ramp" and 24 percent "Hunting."

- **Department of Conservation areas are used by Missourians;** 55 percent reported "Using Missouri Department of Conservation areas" in the last 12 months.
- **Most Missourians enjoy wildlife around their home (86 percent)** and 27 percent of respondents have had wildlife cause problems around their home.
- **When asked about the less than two percent of Missouri's acres that are owned or managed by the Department of Conservation, 47 percent reported that this is "Not enough."** Only two percent reported this is "Too much." About one-quarter of Missourians reported that the amount of land was "About right" (23 percent) and "Don't know" (28 percent).
- **When visiting a conservation area, 60 percent or more indicated they definitely wanted to do or have:** "Have a restroom available" (79 percent); "Have clean drinking water" (74 percent); "Have signs with information about area features" (71 percent); "Have parking lots" (65 percent); and "Hike on trails" and "Have printed information about the area" (61 percent).
- **Missourians support conservation activities and agree that the Department should assist landowners and communities with conservation and management efforts.** Most Missourians agree that "It is important for outdoor places to be protected even if you don't plan to visit the area" (89 percent); and "The Missouri Department of Conservation should designate "natural areas" to protect Missouri's best examples of forests, prairies, marshes and glades" (82 percent). Over three-quarters agree that "The Missouri Department of Conservation should help private landowners who want to restore native communities of plants and animals (77 percent); "The Missouri Department of Conservation should conserve and restore rare and endangered plants (77 percent); "The Missouri Department of Conservation should assist communities that want to include trees and green spaces in housing, business, and shopping developments" (77 percent); and "The Missouri Department of Conservation should make an effort to restore animals that once lived or currently are very rare in Missouri" (76 percent)." Almost three-quarters agree that "Land should be acquired in Missouri for fish, forest, and wildlife conservation" (71 percent).

	Statewide	Metropolitan	Micropolitan	Rural
How familiar are you with the Missouri Department of Conservation? (somewhat and very familiar)	86	84	93	91
Rate the job the Department is doing for: (good and excellent) You;	67	66	73	68
Your family;	65	64	71	68
Your Community;	64	63	69	66
the State of Missouri;	68	68	74	69
Interest in Forests, Fish, and Wildlife? (somewhat and very interested)	95	94	95	97
The Department is a name I can trust. (mildly and strongly agree)	76	76	78	74
The Department is doing a good job of enforcing fish and wildlife laws. (mildly and strongly agree)	65	61	72	75
It is important for outdoor places to be protected even if I don't plan to visit the area. (mildly and strongly agree)	89	91	87	83

*Values in percentages

Summary of Methods

This survey was conducted in 2013 by the University of Missouri-Columbia for the Missouri Department of Conservation, to determine Missourians' awareness and opinions about conservation issues and the participation of Missourians in outdoor recreation activities.

The project team utilized the Assessment Resource Center (ARC) at the University of Missouri –Columbia to select the final survey sample, mail questionnaires, prepare the online Web survey option, and scan returns for the general population survey. Forms were mailed to a **list of Missouri households stratified by their address in counties** defined as **metropolitan** (a core county with at least one urbanized area with 50,000 or more population, plus adjacent counties with at least 25 percent of its work force commuting to the core county), **micropolitan** (a core county with an urban area with at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 population, plus adjacent counties with at least 25 percent of its work force commuting to the core county); or **rural** (rural areas included counties that do not meet the definition of metropolitan or micropolitan as defined by the Office of Management and Budget). **An additional 2,500 recipients were selected from the 25 most-densely populated census tracts in both Kansas City and St. Louis City** according to the 2010 Census, to increase the number of minority recipients.

The list of randomly selected households was obtained from SSI, a national survey research firm. A total of 16,173 forms were successfully delivered and 3,499 were undeliverable. A total of 4,743 responses were returned with useable information with an overall useable response rate of 29.3 percent. Focusing on Census geographies, the response rates were satisfactory and slightly lower than previous similar opinion surveys, although metropolitan areas of the state (27 percent) had lower response rates than micropolitan (34 percent) and rural (38 percent) regions.

Survey recipients could choose to respond using the printed form or through the Internet. A large percentage of respondents (4,178 or 83 percent) chose to complete the printed mail survey; only 866 or 17 percent, chose to complete the questionnaire on the Web-based form.

A report of data tables was prepared in July 2014 at the University of Missouri-Columbia and is entitled "Your Ideas Count! Report of Results of the 2013 Conservation Opinion Survey for the Missouri Department of Conservation." The report is available by contacting Michele Baumer at the Missouri Department of Conservation by email (Michele.Baumer@mdc.mo.gov) or by mail (P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-0180).